



Labor and Public Employees Committee

February 26, 2019

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent 99% of Connecticut's population.

SB 164 "An Act Including Mental or Emotional Impairments within the Definition of Personal Injury under the Workers' Compensation Statutes"

The bill would expand workers' compensation coverage for firefighter and police officers in certain situations that result in mental or emotional impairment.

CCM encourages efforts that will assist our first responders dealing with mental health issues. In the past, CCM has raised concerns over similar proposals that would expand coverage under the workers' compensation. Some of those concerns still remain with the bill as drafted.

In order to best address this issue, CCM has collaborated with a group of interested stakeholders. Comprised of municipal officials along with fire and police employee groups, we have had active discussions, which are leading to the development of a collaborative legislative proposal to assist first responders suffering with mental health issues.

We are optimistic that through this thoughtful and cooperative dialogue that meaningful public policy will be created. We have obtained the services of an out-of-state consultant that has worked on this issue in several other states to facilitate the discussion as well as assist in drafting legislative language. The conversations have taken place for over six months and have been extremely productive.

These discussions have included a holistic approach towards providing our first responders with the necessary awareness, treatment and coverage for mental health illnesses. Our conversations have included a review of prevention and treatment models currently employed, along with the methods, costs and specific criteria for coverage. Specifically, this has included the exploration of whether the workers' compensation insurance system or another method could be employed to assist first responders. We are hopeful to have a final product for legislative review in the coming weeks.

CCM is encouraged by the manner and nature that each stakeholder group has conducted itself. Our considerations have been absent political ideology and have focused on the greater good of our first responders along with the property taxpayers of Connecticut. We will continue to pursue this endeavor until we have a workable solution for all the parties involved.

CCM, with the support of our partners, looks forward to delivering a final compromise proposal as an amendment to SB 164 to the Committee for your consideration.

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If you have any questions, please contact Mike Muszynski (mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org or 203-500-7556) or Brian O'Connor (boconnor@ccm-ct.org or 203-804-4658) of CCM.